A Kind Caution TO Prophane Swearers.

By a Minister of the Church of England.

NOthing can be more piercing to the Heart of a *Christian*, than to hear the multitudes of Oaths and prophane Speeches which proceed out of the Mouths of many People, without any sense of the Evil they do, or fear of any thing they must suffer for so doing. To hear the *Great and Terrible Name of GOD* polluted by Men, which is adored by Angels; and to consider how often that *Sacred Name* is prophaned in common Discourse, which we are not worthy once to mention in our Prayers, is very horrible to all that have not lost the Sense of a *Supream Being*. To such I therefore here apply my self, in the Fear of God, and Faithfulness of a Friend, beseeching them to consider, with the Reason that is common to Man, the few things I have to lay before them, with reference to their dangerous Case; for as yet, serious Consideration and Repentance may prevent the everlasting Misery that is coming upon them.

1. In the first place, It must appear to all the Sense of Mankind, the rashest and foolishest thing in the World, to provoke the Wrath of an *infinitely Powerful Being*, and that meerly for the sake of a few needless and impertinent Words, by which he is justly provoked to cut you off in a Moment, and to cast you into *remediless Torment*. This is what no Man dares do in Cases of less Danger. You dare not revile a *General* at the Head of his Army; no, nor rouze a sleeping Lion when you are within the reach of his Paws. And is the *Almighty God* the only contemptible Being in your Account, that may be provoked without Fear, and offended without Punishment? Do you not read what he hath annexed to his *Third Commandment*? namely, That *he will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain*: that is, that he will certainly and terribly punish such as prophane it. And you are every Minute in danger of this; for God is a *Righteous Judge*, and will do as he hath said.

2. And

2. And, in the next place, your *Baseness* and *Ingratitude* is as great as your *Danger*: For 'tis a most senseless thing to despise that *Almighty Being* which you at other times adore. Is it not a ridiculous Folly to fall on your Knees to *God* one Hour, and to blaspheme him the next? One would not think that this could be done by any one that has any *Sense* or *Consideration*. For it is perfectly horrible to the Reason of Man, that any one should defie *the God that made him, and in whose Hands his Breath is*; and by whom he will be made infinitely happy, or unspeakably miserable, to all Eternity.

3. This is such an *Extremity* of Sin as can only be match'd in Hell, where all are desperate, and without Hope of Mercy. The damned Devils, and the Souls of Men in Hell, may be supposed to rave and blaspheme in their Torment, because they know that their *Chains of Darkness are everlasting*, and can never be knocked off. But for the Man who swims in the Rivers of God's Goodness, and is visited with fresh Presents of his Love every Moment; for this *Favorite Creature* to *set his Mouth against the Heavens*, and to blaspheme a gracious, a patient, and bountiful God, is a heighth of Sin which exceeds the blackness of Hell it self.

4. And all this is done against God, without so much as pleasing any one of our Senses. It is a tasteless and a fruitless Sin. It brings no Pleasure to the Palate, nor Gain to the Purse. And it may even puzzle the prophane Person himself to tell us, for what it is he sells his Soul? Indeed, he does not *sell* at all in this Case: he prodigally gives away his Soul, without Repentance, to the Devil, and parts with a blessed Eternity for Nothing.

5. And it is further to be considered, That the Tongue of Man is his *Glory*, and humane Speech a sort of Miracle in Nature: And it is given to Man, that he might glorifie God, who gave it to him. And will you, dare you, pervert the use of so Divine a Gift? Do but consider how wonderful a thing the Speech of Man is, which by the little different Motions of the Tongue and Lips does plainly and distinctly pronounce Millions of Words: Now, to abuse such an excellent Faculty, is much worse than to be wholly deprived of it; so that the Blasphemer is viler than the very Beasts, and the time may come when he shall wish that he had been born as dumb as they; or that his Lips had been perpetually closed, rather than to have opened them to his own Confusion and Condemnation.

6. And 'tis a very unhappy Circumstance of their Sin, that the *Returns* of it are frequent. Tho' it is of so horrible a Nature, and of such infinite Guilt, yet it may be repeated many times in a Minute; yea, we find some multiplying their Oaths in the same Breath. In many other gross Sins it cannot be so: If a Man be overcome with Drink, there must be a considerable space of time ere he can be so again; or if he be given to prophane the *Sacred Day of our Lord*, he cannot do it every Day. But the *Prophane Swearer* is ready for another Oath almost before the sound of the first is out of our Ears. Yea, some double and treble them in one Sentence, even so as to confound the Sence of what they say by a horrible din of Blasphemy. Ah! what a vast heap of these heinous Sins lie at every common Swearer's Door! 'twould be apt to sink him almost to despair, if he could see the whole Sum of them. And oh! what a *seared and senseless Conscience* has he that feels not this mountainous weight!

7. Indeed, This outragious Treatment of God's Holy Name seems to be one of the utmost Efforts of the Malice of Man against him. His *Being* is above their reach, and his *Happiness* is unchangeable, and cannot be molested. But his *Name* may be prophaned or glorified by Men. And ah! with what spite and rancour do prophane People treat it! And therefore how just is that terrible Threat, (*Deut.* 28. 56.) *If thou shalt not fear this Glorious and Fearful Name,* THE LORD THY GOD, *he will make thy Plagues wonderful.*

Fifthly, Hereby you harden *Infidels* against the *Christian Religion*. It cannot be expected that they should honour *your God*, when you your selves despise him; or that any should embrace *your Religion*, when you your selves trample it under your Feet. Yea, (with Grief, and Shame, and Horror be it spoken,) 'tis by reason of such *scandalous Impieties* as these, that our Holy Religion (the best and purest in it self) is become contemptible amongst the *Heathen*, and that the blessed Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his Doctrine, are despised. But *wo unto them by whom these Offences come*; such as never heard the Name of Christ will fare better in the last Judgment than such as know it, and blaspheme it.

9. Yea, God himself testifies that *his Name is great among the Heathens*, Mal. 1. 11. And we find a *Heathen Emperour* making a Decree, That *whosoever spake any thing amiss of Almighty God should be cut in pieces, and his House made a Dunghil*, Dan. 3. 9. And it was the first Maxim of a *Heathen Philosopher*, *That the highest Veneration be always paid to God.* Which is indeed the sence of all Mankind, and to think or act otherwise, is to confound the very Order of Nature. And therefore we seldom find any mention of the *Name of God* in the Holy Scriptures, without some other word joined with it to strike our Minds with Reverence: As, the *Holy Name*, the *Blessed Name*, the *Glorious Name*, the *Great and Terrible Name*. And the *Jews* and *Turks* have always treated it with profound Veneration. So that it must be an inhumane senselesness and a diabolical Fury to contradict all natural and revealed Religion, and all the sober Sentiments of Mankind, by polluting and prophaning it.

10. And therefore, how light and disproportionable is that small Punishment which our *Laws* have laid upon this horrible Crime! The scandalizing of a *Noble Man*, yea, or the defaming of a Man of *Business* and *Trade*, is usually punished with the Forfeiture of *Hundreds of Pounds*: But the *Great and terrible God* is blasphemed, and People cry out of hard Usage when they pay but a *few shillings* for the monstrous Offence. But this is a Clamour without Reason; and happy will they be, who by this light Infliction are brought to a timely sense of their Sin and Folly, and so escape everlasting Punishment, in those unquenchable Flames, where the *Blasphemer* may be supposed to cry out of his parched Tongue, and say, *It is justly tormented in these Flames.*

11. Upon the whole, how is every Lover of *God*, of *Man*, and of the *Publick Good*, bound in Conscience to oppose this vile and horrible Sin! to reprove it, to shame it, and in all fit Circumstances to inform the Magistrate of it, and to do their utmost to banish it from Humane Society. For it breaks the bounds of all that is *Sacred*, *Civil* or *Decent*; and it is a most high Offence against God, and an Affront to all that bear the Name of Christ, who are by *solemn Vows* obliged to resent and oppose it.

12. For where this direful Sin prevails, how does it render that place a sort of Hell upon Earth. God is greatly honoured in the Regions above. His *Angels* bless him perpetually, and the *Saints* above praise, love, admire, and adore him. Yea, the Birds seem, in their way, to sing forth the Praises of their *Creator*: And the inanimate Creatures observe the Laws of their *Creation*. But wicked Men and damned Devils blaspheme the Name of the most high God, and do him dishonour. But let me entreat all Persons whatsoever, that have Reason and Self-love, that they cast not themselves into this accursed Herd of *Blasphemers*; lest after a little Partnership with them in their Sin, they be for ever conjoined with them in their Punishment.

If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thy self; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it, Prov. 9. 12.

LONDON, *Printed and Sold by* Joseph Downing *in* Bartholomew Close *near* West-Smithfield, 1704.